

# Human Events *A Weekly Analysis for the American Citizen*

Editorial Office 1710 Rhode Island Ave., N. W., WASHINGTON 6, D. C. Telephone NATIONAL 2066

VOL. VI, NO. 21, Issue Number 278, MAY 25, 1949

★

Editors: FELIX MORLEY & FRANK C. HANIGHEN

## THE BRANNAN PLAN SHARPENS THE ISSUE

by James A. McConnell

The so-called "Brannan Plan" for agriculture has now taken legislative form. To quote from Section I of the bill now before Congress is to show how it proposes to pile more bureaucratic confusion on that already built up:

"(1) (A) The term 'income support standard', as of any date, means the average annual aggregate purchasing power of cash receipts from all farm marketings . . . computed as follows: (i) Divide such cash receipts for each of such ten years by the parity index for such year; (ii) add the amounts obtained under (i) above for each of the ten years and divide by ten; (iii) multiply the amount obtained under (ii) above by the most recent parity index."

For the past 20 years, American political and agricultural leadership has been trying to secure for agriculture special aids through soil conservation payments, marketing agreements, indirect subsidies in the form of support prices, and in some cases direct subsidies to producers.

Each of these steps has been sold to the country largely on the basis of insuring an adequate food supply. Several of the devices came into use under a controlled war economy. Others arose out of the terrible experiences of the depression years of the thirties. There is very little justification, however, even from the standpoint of protecting the nation's food supply, for extending most of these practices into a going peace-time economy.

Now that the Brannan Plan has been unveiled -- a plan which, if adopted, will inevitably lead to nationalization of agriculture -- farm leadership is horrified at Mr. Brannan's proposal. Actually, the Secretary of Agriculture should be thanked for so boldly setting forth the logical consequence of farm programs of the past two decades.

## II

The real question before Congress, and before the agricultural leaders of the country, today, is not: "Shall we have the Brannan Plan?" Rather, it is: "Do we have the courage to turn back from the use of farm subsidies and other aids which imply regimentation, inefficiency in food production, waste and, finally, loss of political freedom?"

Because of the steps already taken we cannot look at the Brannan Plan and decide for or against on the basis of its provisions alone. In making a decision, we must examine the background of our thinking, plan-

Copyright 1949 by HUMAN EVENTS, INC.

ning and experience with our existing agricultural programs. We must decide whether we want to nationalize our food production.

If that is not considered desirable, then we must face the fact that simply deciding against the Brannan proposals will not settle the issue. Unless we start to modify the national policies which have logically led up to the Brannan Plan, the whole question will be back on our necks over and over again. As in other matters, we may nationalize agriculture by piecemeal decisions, without having ever intended to do so. Price supports, which lead to Government ownership of great stocks of grain, or payments to farmers from the Treasury, inevitably lead to acreage restrictions. Crop loans above the market price lead to Government-owned storage. Payments for soil conservation practices open the way for Government intrusion into the fertilizer business. Each new series of moves requires another series to make the earlier decisions work. Step by step, down the road to Statism we go.

The basic decision that now faces us is whether we shall have a planned food economy, with a tremendous Federal bureaucracy to control it, or whether we shall depend on getting adequate food supplies by the simple, low-cost method of allowing the free price mechanism to work on both sides of the supply and demand equation. If we want to maintain freedom on the farms it is not sufficient simply to turn thumbs down on Mr. Brannan's scheme. We must go back and reverse some prior decisions.

Many sincere men believe that the hazards of farming, due to weather and the biological nature of the industry, are so great that the nation cannot trust its food supply entirely to free enterprise. Plausible arguments are advanced to sustain this viewpoint. In many quarters, there is a feeling that the nation requires, and that farmers are entitled to, safeguards against disaster price levels due to causes remote from their control. Assuming that these are valid arguments, then such safeguards as are used should be planned and implemented on a basis which does not focus control of the entire agricultural production in Washington. It will be a sad day for all, if none may farm except as he conforms to the regulations of a central government.

### III

Already we are in serious trouble as a result of present price support operations. The Federal Government will find itself, next fall, not only burdened with unwieldy surpluses of wheat and corn, but, in accordance with commitments already made, compelled to support, to some degree, most of the major articles of food, including pork.

Faced with this prospect, Government administrators are naturally reaching for powers to deal with it. The Administration, by action of Congress, is now, through loans implemented by one-way agreements, guaranteeing farmers, on basic crops, an outlet for all they can produce at 90 per cent of parity price. If big crops are harvested this year, as seems likely, Mr. Truman will find himself in an intolerable position. So there is no reason for surprise at the Brannan Plan.

If present attempts to pass a new agricultural bill fail, the Aiken Plan will go into effect in 1950. Its proponents maintain that supply can gradually be brought into balance with demand by means of flexible price supports, varying on basic commodities between 60 per cent of parity on the lower side and 90 per cent on the upper side. Even if the lower levels do not encourage overproduction of some items, what is there in the record of price supports to indicate that the Administration will be permitted to set support prices at or near these floors?

The history of the Aiken bill itself provides the answer. Its general provisions were agreed upon by responsible agricultural leaders, by the Department of Agriculture and by Congress, as providing a workable retreat from the very high post-war guarantees of the Steagall amendment. Sponsors of individual agricultural commodities fought it every step of the way. Pressure groups continue to fight it. Erosion can be expected until the principal basic concepts are no longer discernible or workable. This is an indication of the difficulties blocking the road back.

All this indicates the inevitability of something like the Brannan proposal -- that farmers turn their agricultural plant over to the Government, with full powers for directing it. The only way this plan can be carried out is by complete regimentation of farmers and, finally, use of police powers to enforce the necessary regulations. The costs of administration of an agriculture completely regimented will be staggering. The tax-supported Federal bureaucracy which will be built up, county by county, will destroy the effectiveness of all farm organizations. No private institution can compete with or oppose such a bureaucracy.

#### IV

In view of Secretary Brannan's proposals, the nation must now take a look at its whole agricultural policy, examining these points:

(1) The present hit-or-miss farm plans are politically and economically impossible to operate. Proof of this is the past experience with potatoes. The spectacle of farmers delivering ever-increasing quantities of grain to government ownership is another. That this

situation was coming has long been apparent to far-seeing lawmakers. Due to pressure exerted by special groups, however, Congress has been unable to get the Administration out of its untenable position.

(2) The so-called Brannan Plan is a logical sequence of trying to operate, in peace time, a wartime agricultural program designed to get maximum production, regardless of cost. The plan recognizes that we cannot, as a nation, continue to subsidize farmers to produce great crops and then use the Government as an unrestricted dumping ground. Secretary Brannan's Plan is a frank proposal that we move on into a complete regimentation of agriculture as a national policy. But regulation of farm crops and acreage is a natural product of Government subsidies. And support prices, high enough to furnish farmers incentive to produce, are subsidies.

(3) Under the Brannan Plan, nominal ownership of the land and tools may remain in the hands of the farmer, but management will be transferred to Government. There is not the slightest evidence that the country will get a more stable food supply, or a balanced supply, or one that is economically produced, through the Brannan Plan. British experience, with the same sort of program, has required a subsidy costing Britain about 20 per cent of the total food bill of that country. Such programs must necessarily lead to use of police powers, involving loss of economic and personal freedom.

At the moment, all groups of people of this nation are endeavoring to protect their high standard of living and avoid a major depression. Farmers are no exception. It is not strange that we see the paradox of conservative farm groups resorting to socialistic steps, such as asking for Government aids to protect their position.

It is doubtful, however, that farm people, as a group, have yet realized how the use of these aids has led them to the very precipice of Statism. I am inclined to believe that a majority of the two million farm operators who produce about 85 per cent of our food supply, would turn this proposition down if they could really get a chance at it on a clear-cut basis. The opportunity to do this, however, will be blocked.

The fight against complete regimentation of agriculture will have to be carried through by top agricultural leadership on the basis of a high degree of statesmanship which looks to the welfare of the Republic as a whole. There is evidence that such leadership exists in some of our national farm organizations. The time for the farmer to show true patriotism is at hand.

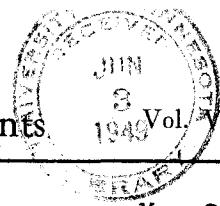
---

James A. McConnell, an occasional contributor to HUMAN EVENTS, is an up-state New York farmer.

---

Quotation up to a paragraph is permitted with credit to HUMAN EVENTS. For reproduction or more extensive quotation address requests to HUMAN EVENTS, 1710 Rhode Island Avenue, N. W., Washington 6, D. C. Trial subscription, three months for \$3. Six months, \$5.50. One year, \$10. Two years, \$18. Domestic airmail (including APO and FPO) one year, \$12.00; foreign (regular mail) one year, \$11. Foreign airmail rates on request. Please remit in U.S.A. DOLLARS. Allow two weeks for new subscriptions or change of address to become effective.

# Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to Human Events*



By Frank C. Hanighen

May 25, 1949

**GERMAN ARMY:** Our High Command received quite a shock when it listened to a very private lecture given by General Georges Revers, Chief of the French General Staff, during his visit to Washington recently. This column can reveal that General Revers advocated German rearmament and the gradual creation of a German army officered by Germans. The only qualification made by the General was that the French Army should be given sufficient equipment to keep one step ahead of such a German force. Revers also intimated that the French had already started to lay the basis for a German army by beginning to build up a German military constabulary in the French zone. In short, the Chief of the French General Staff went much further than had ever been advocated by American military planners, and his hearers inferred that Revers was indirectly chiding the American Army on its backwardness in dealing with this issue. High American officers believe that Revers' words must have been approved in advance by the French Government.

As a matter of fact, we find Revers' stand much less astonishing than did the men in the Pentagon. Last winter, this column was the first in the country to report the significant article in Le Monde, key French newspaper, advocating a Franco-German alliance. We have long felt that much of the widely-advertised French opposition to constructive measures in Germany was simply the lowest sort of politics, that French politicians had yielded to a "hate" policy paced by the Communists; and that the real directors of French policy actually entertained quite other ideas. Also, all the old Morgenthau-minded elements in this country found it convenient to hide behind the most extreme utterances of the anti-German zealots in France, asserting that "French policy" was the correct policy. And too many American papers and foreign correspondents have been influenced by these vengeful forces.

\* \* \* \* \*

**POINT FOUR:** Any proposal billed as "bold" and "new" must naturally -- as the political game is played -- get under way as timidly and tentatively as possible. Hence, there's an economic pact with Uruguay under negotiation, and very much under wraps at present, in which a pattern of guarantees to foreign capital will be conceded by that little republic. The same sort of provisions are being put into a new draft of the Export-Import Bank's loan form. What all this means is that a pattern is being created for a later campaign to "raise living standards" of "backward areas", etc., etc. These moves coincide with last week's entertainment of President Dutra of Brazil, and the publicity thereon. (It is interesting that the State Department privately urged all Washington newspaper editors to play up the visit of President Dutra.)

Such guarantees, of course, are worth much less to hesitant capital than the biggest guarantee of all -- Treasury backing for the principle and interest of all U.S. investments abroad. It is all very well for the Wall Street Journal to warn capitalists of the economic unsoundness of such pledges. Too many capitalists will remain heedless of the adage that if the State gives, the State can take away. But we suspect many holders of funds will fall hard. There is a story around Washington that one of the greatest figures in international finance inspired Point Four, as the President's "bold new" program is called. It is claimed that this knight of free enterprise had some talks with Mr. Clark Clifford, one of the President's principal advisers, last December about an international holding company designed to operate in this hemisphere and to be guaranteed by the U.S. Government. The flexible Mr. Clifford -- so the account goes -- appropriated the idea, enlarged on it, gave it forensic phraseology and lo! Point Four of the Inaugural address emerged.

Copyright 1949 by HUMAN EVENTS, INC.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Or, according to an alternative version, Clifford cast about for a notion to fill out the speech and hastily grabbed the dream of the international financier. Whatever the truth, we have the feeling that some slightly lunar circumstances surrounded the birth of a project about which we will hear much in coming months.

\* \* \* \* \*

TARIFF: A great wheeling movement of capitalists, workers, bureaucrats and the various fuglemen of these groups seems on the way. With the recession, new and more realistic considerations have come to the fore; and the keener struggle for markets, profits and jobs will alter some of the never-never-land prose of the fuglemen. But naturally the symbols will be different. While we have been dwelling much of late on the tariff, that word will not necessarily be prevalent. The other night we listened to a private discussion between the managing editor of a large chain of newspapers and one of his principal scribes. They were indeed interested in the developing tariff problem and accepted the assumption that the issue would be "big stuff" ere long. But their point of discussion concerned the way in which to present it to the millions. They came to the conclusion that the only method was to write about it in terms of "jobs". That word may be the new symbol under which the tariff controversy will enter the consciousness of the masses of people.

The other evening we watched a GOP Senator literally lick his chops over the anticipated trade debate and listened to his claim that unemployment among oil, pottery and glass workers would aid a GOP attack on the Trade Agreements Act. The Senator's expectations may be premature -- but only by a matter of months. One of his Congressional colleagues in the Lower House presented a slightly different picture. He said that the situation in two of those fields -- glass and pottery -- had not yet reached a bothersome stage. But he recalled how, back in 1940, what he termed "Hull's" trade agreement with Czechoslovakia threatened a glass plant in his district. It was the union delegation which arrived first in his office to protest, with the employers trailing behind. But today? -- "Nope", he replied, "they haven't shown up recently. But I figure that it won't be many months until that union crowd will knock on my door." Nope, we haven't heard any recent praise for the Trade Agreements from the lips of Mr. Philip Murray and Mr. Bill Green.

\* \* \* \* \*

LILIENTHAL: The cards are down finally on L'Affaire Lilienthal. When the Lilienthal controversy started over two years ago, this column was among the first to criticize the appointment of the gentleman and three months ago warned that another storm was on the way. We claimed he was unfit for this key job and we charged insincerity and obfuscation on the part of his supporters. Lilienthal is the type of bureaucrat-on-the-make who has wrought such havoc in the past two decades. A propagandist rather than an administrator, he knew the techniques of headline hunting, as many a newspaperman well realized. Also, although here one must concede he was given the lead by the White House, he preserved a certain New Deal attitude towards security measures; i. e., it is better to risk national security than to incur any criticism on the score of "red-baiting". Finally, he was appointed ten days before the 1946 elections, for the grossest political reasons.

In the fight over the confirmation, his friends used fantastic arguments. One was that his critics were anti-Semitic. This column at the time showed the falsity of that charge. Those who opposed his appointment thoroughly approved of the appointment to the Commission of Dr. Bacher and Admiral Strauss, both Jews. Sinister public power interests? The most prominent private power advocate in the Senate, Styles Bridges, offered to back the appointment of the great public-power proponent, ex-Senator Robert M. LaFollette, whose name had been urged on the President

by the Republican Vandenberg and the Democrat Byrnes. But these and other facts were drowned in an avalanche of hysterical propaganda which stirred up the intelligentsia and many public leaders in defense of Lilienthal. Intellectuals took the same bigoted and boneheaded attitude on this question as they did on the matter of the House Un-American Activities Committee. It was a spectacle of the stubborn ignorance and prejudice which has marked the so-called liberal movement in this country for many years. Today, the cards are down, and even one of those who was deluded by this liberal propaganda of two years ago, Senator Hickenlooper, now calls for the resignation of Lilienthal. It is about time.

\* \* \* \* \*

GRIDIRON: After the famous Gridiron dinner and show last week end, some of those who had attended gave us their impressions, as follows: Senator Millikin, the speaker of the evening did well; the crowd gave marked applause to Senator Harry Byrd; the President seemed a bit nettled at the needling he received in the show. He might well have reacted in this way. For, it was considered significant that the newspapermen lampooned Mr. Truman's Welfare State in the most biting way from a number of angles. There was indeed an unusual sharpness in the skit, "Harry's Ragtag, Bobtail Band", to the tune of "Alexander's Ragtime Band". One more note: at a moment when Shanghai was falling to the Communists, the scribes (was it shame?) did not once mention China.

Accounts in the press gave little notice to another feature of the show -- a burlesque of the "coalition" of Southern Democrats and Republicans, whose banner was the Stars and Bars with an elephant head in the center. One Member of Congress complained that the writers of the skit incorrectly placed the personalities of the "Dixiecrat" movement. We did not see the show, but the Congressman may well have been right in his criticism. Washington newspapermen, like so many in the North, show insufficient knowledge of the great States' Rights movement. In this connection we can report an encouraging piece of news. One aggregation of journalists plans an intensive study of that movement next month. The young gentlemen of The Next Voter, that excellent publication of the Brooks School, North Andover, Mass. (mentioned in this column on March 23, 1949) are moving south of the Mason-Dixon line right after school closes. They will look into the States' Rights movement, the TVA, the memory of Bilbo and other subjects. We feel confident that their final judgment on the South will prove more startling than any rebel yell.

\* \* \* \* \*

FDR JR: Will the Roosevelt myth create a dynasty? Over the last week end we heard a good deal of talk about the smashing victory of Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr. in the New York Congressional by-election. Friends and critics alike started to chart the future of the young man, from Capitol Hill to Albany and finally to the White House. Hold on! World Biography records that Mr. Roosevelt was born on August 17, 1914 in Campobello, New Brunswick, Canada (where his parents had a summer home). The Constitution says that only a "natural born" citizen shall be eligible to the office of President (Article II, section 5). Thus Mr. Roosevelt was born on foreign soil and therefore cannot be eligible. In rebuttal, however, some say that the Citizenship Act of 1940 has so defined a citizen that the Congressman-elect can be considered eligible for the highest office. We asked Professor Edwin Borchard for his opinion and he replied, "If Mr. Roosevelt was born on foreign soil, he cannot be eligible for the office of President." That should settle it. But you never can tell. Yesterday, we heard a wit refer to "The Campobello Kid"; fighting words in the face of Mr. Roosevelt's partisans. In view of the soaring nature of political ambitions, the durability of political myths and the obscurity of statistics, we have our fingers crossed.

# Book Events

---

The Age of Constantine the Great, by Jacob Burckhardt; translated by Moses Hadas.  
New York: Pantheon Books. \$4.50. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

It is curious that a work so famous as this should have waited almost a century before it was translated into English. Yet certainly it holds a much greater general interest for readers of our age than it could have had for Burckhardt's generation, for the parallels between the Roman world of the Fourth Century and Western civilization of the Twentieth are obvious and melancholy. Both are darkened by the presage of decay and dissolution. There is in each the sense of physical and spiritual enervation; the same conscious dread of unassimilable peoples beyond the limits of the civilization, but pressing with ever greater energy against its walls. There is the same sterility of art. There is a decline of rational philosophy, a revival of magic, a proliferation of superstitions, an eccentricity of manners and dress. But it is, I believe, straining the parallel to perceive, as Professor Hadas does, in Fourth Century Christianity an almost perfect counterpart to Twentieth Century Communism; that is, "a revolutionary social doctrine" propagated by a fanatical faction whose members possessed the "religious certainty that their end justified their means".

Burckhardt draws no such analogy, of course, since in his day Communism as a social force can scarcely be said to have existed. In contrast to Gibbon he is at pains to show that Christianity, as such, was in no way responsible for the conditions that made inevitable the doom and destruction of the Empire. He declines, however, to accept the picture of the period that has been presented by Christian apologetics, and he uses many Christian personages of the period with scant respect, reserving a special indignation for the chronicles of Eusebius of Caesarea. Burckhardt seems to consider that the chief factors in the victory of Christianity over the old classical paganism and over the new mystery religions such as Mithraism was the doctrine of personal immortality. The idea of the survival after death was growing everywhere, as if in compensation for the inescapable doom of civilization; even paganism had adopted it, but only Christians possessed it in a simple and unambiguous form. The absolute conviction with which the Christians cherished it had been shown in the eagerness for martyrdom that had defeated all official efforts at repression by terror. The doctrine of forgiveness attracted the degraded, the outcast and the slave, and the Christian practice of almsgiving, the hungry and the dispossessed.

In Constantine, Burckhardt sees another example of the type of ruthless and determined military usurper, better qualified, perhaps, than most for the game of statecraft. In this view his putative conversion was dictated wholly by expediency, on the familiar principle of "when you can't lick 'em, jine 'em". The Christians, emerging from a season of fearful persecution, found in him a protector; Constantine saw in Christianity, and in the power of its symbolisms, the instrument for consolidation of his power and the establishment of his dynasty. In the great theological battles which broke forth among the Christians almost as soon as the persecutions had ended, he appears to have played Arian and Orthodox against each other, as he was later to play pagan against Christian, for no nobler purpose than to enlarge his powers as mediator. His greatness, in short, lies not in his private but in his historical character; for during his reign was begun that transition from classical antiquity to mediaevalism to which Professor Toynbee has given the name of palinogenesis, or rebirth, and which, he tells us, offers the only escape from the historical trap. What Burckhardt makes clear is that save for the triumph of Christianity, and its subsequent taming of the barbarian destroyers, no rebirth would have been possible.

1710 RHODE ISLAND AVENUE, N. W., WASHINGTON 6, D. C.